Topanga and Cory take 2

'90s coming-of-age series spins off Girl Meets World PAGE 11

EH-MAZING PLACE

WITH THE AMAZING RACE COMING TO CANADA NEXT SUMMER, METRO SUGGESTS FIVE MUST-SEE SPOTS PAGE 14

SASKATOON metro®

Wednesday, December 12, 2012

News worth sharing.

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Premier Brad Wall weighs in on the $15.1-billion Nexen deal on Tuesday in the legislature rotunda.
JEFF MACKEY/METRO IN REGINA

Wall backs new oilsands restrictions

Nexen deal. Premier says he's OK with feds' approval of CNOOC takeover; wants potash, uranium protected under foreign-investment rules

The man who led the fight against a foreign takeover of PotashCorp is supporting the federal government's new rules that restrict state-owned enterprises in the oilsands.

"I think it's just a clear signal to send out that foreign investment is welcomed here, but it's different if it's a government-owned enterprise, without distinguishing countries," Premier Brad Wall said Tuesday.

In fact, Wall said, Ottawa should go further.

"We think if it makes sense for the federal government to restrict state-owned enterprises from other countries in terms of these takeovers in the oilsands, that it would make sense just to be explicit about that restriction extending to potash — where we actually have a greater proportion of the worldwide reserves than we do in oil — and in uranium," he said.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper ended months of uncertainty on Friday by approving a $15.1-billion foreign-takeover bid of Calgary-based Nexen by the China National Offshore Oil Co., or CNOOC. Industry Minister Christian Paradis said he was satisfied that the deal would be a net benefit to Canada.

The net-benefit test was an argument Saskatchewan used in 2010 when it opposed Anglo-Australian miner BHP Billiton's $40-billion US proposed takeover of Saskatoon-based PotashCorp, the world's leading potash producer.

Wall vehemently opposed the deal on the grounds Saskatchewan could lose billions in revenue from taxes and royalties. The premier painted the proposed takeover as anti-Canadian and said the country's strategic interests would be at risk if the province sold most of its potash industry to an international company.

Ottawa rejected the takeover after concluding it failed to benefit Canada.

Wall said Tuesday that the Nexen deal was different.

"Because of the size of the takeover here, it wasn't strategic. It didn't warrant that estimation.... And there weren't state-owned enterprise rules going into it, so this company acted in good faith," he said.

But Wall also said a case could be made for loosening rules for private firms as long as there are limits on takeovers where the Canadian company involved controls a strategic asset, such as potash.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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NEWS

Norwalk-like virus

St. Paul's Hospital closed to visitors

The Saskatoon Health Region says it's taking "extraordinary measures" to try to contain the outbreak of a Norwalk-like virus, which surfaced last Friday at St. Paul's Hospital.

More new cases of diarrhea and vomiting among patients and staff have surfaced prompting the health region to close the hospital to visitors in an effort to contain the gastro-intestinal virus.

It is still unconfirmed whether or not the outbreak is the Norwalk virus.

The health region says St. Paul's Hospital will remained closed until further notice. METRO

CO scare. Carbon monoxide detectors may come to schools

Some school administrators in Saskatoon are rethinking mandatory carbon-monoxide detectors after 15 students at St. Joseph School were sent to hospital due to a CO scare on Monday.

According to Donald Lloyd, who is the superintendent of administrative services with the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Division, they've reported the incident to the provincial government and are currently in discussion about the possibility of getting detectors installed.

Members of the Saskatoon Fire and Protective Services said it's highly unlikely the students were suffering from CO poisoning as levels found in the school were extremely low. MORGAN MODJESKI/ METRO IN SASKATOON

Kent Rathwell, president and founder of Sun Country Highway, stands next to the electric Tesla Roadster in Ottawa, holding a bottle of water from the Atlantic Ocean. Rathwell is driving coast to coast promoting emission-free long-distance travel. SUN COUNTRY HIGHWAY/DICK ROBINSON

The Trans-Canada Highway goes green

Driving into the future. 80 charging stations for electric cars added along the iconic route

JANE CAULFIELD
jane.caulfield@metronews.ca

Celebrating its 50th birthday, the Trans-Canada Highway got a sustainable facelift with the addition of 80 free public charging stations for electric cars.

Highlighting the highway's new green look, Kent Rathwell, president and founder of Sun Country Highway — the company responsible for developing and placing the charging stations — is driving from coast to coast in an electric car.

"It's a grassroots approach to an environmentally sustainable country," Rathwell said in an interview.

Rathwell added that long-distance travel with an electric vehicle needs an infrastructure to support it — but with 200 charging stations added across the country (and counting), Canada can now support emissions-free travel.

"We are educating Canadians on the advantages of electric vehicles and demonstrating how the adoption of electric vehicles will allow Canada to reduce their carbon emissions.... Electric vehicles are key to empowering economies at regional levels without new taxes or carbon penalties," Rathwell said in an email.

Starting the trip in Newfoundland in November, Rathwell is making his way across the Prairies over the next couple of days, planning to stop at charging stations in Regina and Saskatoon.

"It would have been a lot better to do this in the summer," Rathwell added.

"But we wanted to prove a point."

And driving one of only 500 Tesla Roadsters in Canada — a sports car that is 100 per cent electric — Rathwell is making his point in style.

Weather permitting, Rathwell and his car will be at the Delta Regina between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m on Wednesday. He will be at the Bessborough in Saskatoon later on that day between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Station facts

- Adding charging stations makes the Trans-Canada Highway the longest and greenest highway in the world.
- Each charging station is entirely public, accessible and free.
- Sun Country Highway is a sister company to Sun Country Farms, the first green-powered company in Saskatchewan.
- Charging stations are placed every 100 to 200 kilometres along the Trans-Canada Highway.

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Saskatoon's own Sheepdogs, from left, Leot Hanson, Sam Corbett, Ewan Currie and Ryan Gullen play the Odeon Events Centre on Wednesday night. CONTRIBUTED/MATT BARNES

For the Sheepdogs there's no place like home, sweet home

Cross-Canada tour. Band thanks hometown for being 'so incredibly supportive'

MORGAN MODJESKI
morgan.modjeski@metronews.ca

As the Sheepdogs approach the final stretch of their Canadian tour, they say Wednesday's concert at the Odeon Events Centre in Saskatoon will be a welcome break from the rock-star rush.

Bass player Ryan Gullen says that although the band has reached a level of international celebrity, Saskatoon is still home, sweet home.

"Saskatoon still is one of our favourite places to play in the world," Gullen said in an interview from Winnipeg. "It's great. It's just fun to come back and see friends, familiar faces and see our family. But we do come back there in our time off, so it still is home."

He added, "It's just like we're playing a hometown show, but just on a bigger scale than when we were playing Amigos or something like that."

Be it ever so humble

"Saskatoon still is one of our favorite places to play in the world. It's great. It's just fun to come back and see friends, familiar faces and see our family."
Bass player Ryan Gullen

Gullen says that although band members are constantly on the road, they know they still have a solid fan base to come back to.

"Saskatoon has always been so incredibly supportive of us — really, from the beginning — and it's only grown from there," he said.

Having time in their hometown will give the band some time to relax and take a step back from the demanding lifestyle that comes with being on tour, he says.

"It's nice, like I said. It's refreshing to get a taste of home right in the middle of the tour," he said.

The Sheepdogs play the Odeon Events Centre on Wednesday, with Yukon Blonde.

Building boom

Province's housing starts double last year's pace

Saskatchewan continues to lead the country in new urban housing. New statistics from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. show urban housing starts in November were up by 53 per cent over the same time last year. Nationally, housing starts have risen three per cent since last November. Economy Minister Bill Boyd says the combination of a higher population and robust economy is boosting Saskatchewan's construction sector.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Domestic dispute

Baby doused with alcohol doing OK

A newborn baby splattered with alcohol during a domestic assault was unharmed, police in Prince Albert say. Officers were called to the dispute at a home in Prince Albert on the weekend. They allege a man was causing damage in the home and poured alcohol over his ex-girlfriend and the one-month-old child. The man, 22, faces two charges of assault and is scheduled to appear in court on Dec. 20.
THE CANADIAN PRESS/CBC

Annual jamboree

Lady Antebellum cancels Craven gig

Pop-country trio Lady Antebellum has cancelled its performance at Craven Country Jamboree in July, as lead singer Hillary Scott is pregnant. Festival organizers say they are working to book another performer to replace the trio. Other headliners include Kenny Chesney and Tim McGraw.
METRO

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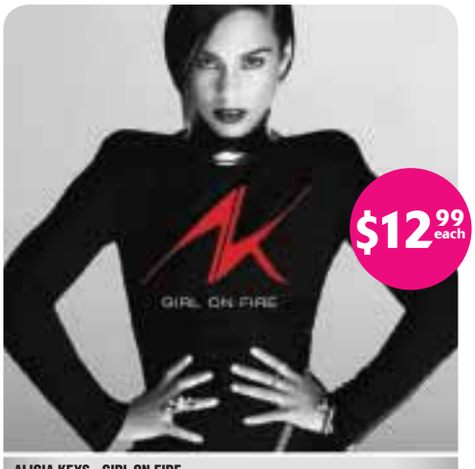

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Conditions worsen in Syrian refugee camps as winter looms

Survival. Basic necessities are scarce, from blankets and food to toilets and medical supplies

Abdullah Ahmed, 10, suffered burns in a Syrian air strike. He stands outside his family's tent in a village for displaced Syrians on Tuesday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

This tent camp sheltering Syrians uprooted by their country's brutal civil war has lost the race against winter: the ground under white tents is soaked in mud, fights erupt over scarce blankets and volunteer doctors routinely run out of medicine for coughing, runny-nosed children.

The 21-month-old battle to bring down President Bashar Assad has already forced some 3 million Syrians from their homes according to a new estimate, and cold, wet winter weather is making life increasingly unbearable for those displaced by growing the conflict.

Many of the roughly 12,000 people seeking refuge in the tent camp near the Syrian village of Atmeh on the Turkish border fled with just the clothes on their backs, running from intensifying bombing raids by the Syrian air force in recent months.

A 10-year-old boy, Abdullah Ahmed, walked around the camp with a bandaged head and hands after suffering burns during an air strike on his home.

"I have nothing left except the mercy of God," said Mariam Ghraibeh, a 60-year-old war widow whose home in the town of Kafr Awaid, about 140 kilometres to the south, was destroyed in an air strike a month ago.

Ghraibeh and her family of 15 now huddle in tents, sleeping on thin mattresses on cold plastic. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. recognition

An elevated status

President Barack Obama declared Syria's main opposition group the sole "legitimate representative" of its country's people Tuesday, deeming the move "a big step" in the international diplomatic efforts to end Syrian President Bashar Assad's embattled regime.

Obama said the newly formed Syrian Opposition Council "is now inclusive enough" to be granted the elevated status, paving the way for greater U.S. support. Recognition of the council as the sole representative of Syria's diverse population brings the U.S. in line with Britain, France and several of America's Arab allies. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Judges boycott in Egypt

Egypt's judges said Tuesday that most of them would not oversee a nationwide referendum on a contentious draft constitution, as tens of thousands of opponents and supporters of the country's Islamist president staged rival rallies in Cairo four days ahead of the vote.

The demonstrations and judges' boycott came hours after masked assailants set upon opposition protesters staging a sit-in at Tahrir Square, firing birdshot and swinging knives and sticks, according to security officials. They later said that five "hardened criminals" were arrested in connection with the attack.

Eleven protesters were wounded, the MENA state news agency said, citing a Health Ministry spokesman.

The violence served as a stark reminder of the stakes in Egypt's political battle over the disputed draft constitution, which goes to a nationwide referendum on Saturday. The charter has deeply polarized the nation and triggered some of the worst street violence since Morsi took office in June as Egypt's first freely elected president.

A supporter of President Mohammed Morsi in Cairo Tuesday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sitting out

90%

Judges' Club chairman Ahmed el-Zind said that 90 per cent of the nation's judges would not oversee the Saturday vote, casting doubt on the process' legitimacy.

On one side of the divide, there is President Mohammed Morsi, his Muslim Brotherhood and ultra-orthodox Salafis, while on the other side there is a collection of liberals, leftists and Christians who claim the draft charter restricts freedoms and gives Islamists vast influence over the running of the country. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mali

PM ousted by military junta

Soldiers arrested Mali's prime minister and forced him to resign before dawn on Tuesday, showing that the military remains the real power in this once-stable West African nation now in constant turmoil. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Board games

Nigeria gets Monopolized

Nigeria's largest city of Lagos is no boardwalk, but now Monopoly is taking inspiration from the city's sprawling chaos.

Officials unveiled a Lagos-themed Monopoly board game Tuesday in the city. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

South Africa

Mandela still ailing in hospital

Military doctors are treating South Africa's former president Nelson Mandela for a recurring lung infection, an ailment the 94-year-old anti-apartheid leader remains susceptible to because of his age. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Shock is etched on the faces of people outside a Portland, Ore.-area shopping mall Tuesday after a gunman wearing camouflage and body armour opened fire. BRUCE ELY/THE OREGONIAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Shots after shots after shots …'

Pre-Christmas terror. Shoppers flee mall in a frenzy of fear as camouflaged gunman opens fire, killing 2

A gunman wearing camouflage and body armour brought terror to a crowded Christmas shopping mall Tuesday.

Shoppers screamed and cried, grabbed their children and ran for the nearest doors as shot after shot rang out.

Police said two people — and the gunman — died.

The gunman apparently killed himself. Sheriff's Lt. James Rhodes said amid the chaos that the police didn't fire any shots.

Kira Rowland said she was shopping at Macy's in the Clackamas Town Center when the shots started.

"All of a sudden you hear two shots, which sounded like balloons popping," Rowland said.

"Everybody got on the ground. I grabbed the baby from the stroller and got on the ground."

Rowland said she heard people screaming and crying.

"I put the baby back in the stroller and ran like hell," Rowland said. "It was awful. It was shots after shots after shots like a massacre."

Holli Bautista, 28, said she was shopping in Macy's for a Christmas dress.

"I heard people running and screaming and saying 'Get out, there's somebody shooting'," she said. Hundreds of shoppers and mall employees started running. Bautista said police officers, firefighters and emergency workers were pouring in.

"There's tons of ambulances lined up," she said.

Macy's employees Pam Moore and Austin Patty said the shooter was short, with dark hair, dressed in camouflage.

He had body armour and a rifle and was wearing a white mask, they said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"I heard about 20 shots, and everyone hit the ground. That's when we all just ran."
Pam Moore,
Macy's employee

Not worth the risk?

Vancouver DJs ban prank calls

A Vancouver morning show has decided prank calls aren't worth the risk after the tragic fallout from an Aussie radio station's call to the London hospital where the Duchess of Cambridge was being treated for severe morning sickness.

Jack FM 96.9 morning show hosts Tara Jean Stevens and Kiah Tucker put an indefinite moratorium on prank calls after nurse Jacintha Saldanha was found dead, apparently by suicide, days after she was a victim of the prank.

EMILY JACKSON/METRO

Royal hoax. Could radio station face charges for prank-turned-tragedy?

Could the Australian radio station behind a royal hoax phone call face criminal charges for airing the conversation? The question was being discussed in legal circles Tuesday.

Two DJs from Sydney's 2DayFM who phoned an exclusive London hospital got confidential information about the pregnant Duchess of Cambridge, who was there suffering from severe morning sickness.

A nurse who answered the call died later — leading to wide criticism of DJs Mel Greig and Michael Christian, who had pretended to be Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles.

The New South Wales state Surveillance Devices Act prohibits the broadcast of recorded private conversations without participants' permission, with violations punishable by up to five years in prison and a fine of up to $58,000.

Privacy law expert Barbara McDonald said the Commercial Radio Code of Practice has a similar ban.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Defiant move. North Korea fires rocket in face of global condemnation

North Korea defied international warnings and fired a long-range rocket Wednesday, the second launch under its new leader and a clear sign Pyongyang is pushing forward with its quest to develop the technology needed to deliver a nuclear warhead.

Pyongyang's state media quickly claimed that the country had successfully put a peaceful satellite into orbit with its long-range Unha-3 rocket — the North's stated goal of the launch. But South Korea and Japan said they couldn't immediately confirm that.

The launch was something of a surprise, as North Korea had indicated technical problems with the rocket and recently extended its launch window to Dec. 29.

A rocket expert said North Korea's rocket appeared to have improved on an April launch, which broke apart shortly after liftoff, but that it might be a day before U.S. officials could determine whether a North Korean satellite was circling the Earth.

The United Nations, Washington, Seoul and others see the launch as a cover for a test of technology for missiles that could be used to strike the United States.

South Korean soldiers watch a public TV reporting news about North Korea's rocket launch. AHN YOUNG-JOON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

South Korean Defence Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok told a nationally televised news conference that a South Korean Aegis-equipped destroyer detected the launch at 9:51 a.m., local time, and the first stage fell into the Yellow Sea about a minute later. The rocket then flew over a South Korean island near the border with North Korea a minute after that. The rocket was seen flying west of Okinawa at 9:58 a.m., and then disappeared from South Korean radars. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Santa filling out underwater wish list

Dressed in a Santa Claus outfit, a diver feeds sardines at the Coex Aquarium in Seoul on Tuesday. Christmas is one of the biggest holidays in South Korea, where more than half of the population are Christians. AHN YOUNG-JOON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Stolen iPhone's app captures alleged thief

iFoiled. Owner is sent photo and location of alleged thief via email when they attempt to unlock the phone

It's a cool app that may catch a sticky-fingered iPhone thief in Britain.

A woman is wanted for questioning after she unwittingly took a picture of herself with a stolen iPhone.

Police in Sussex have released a photo of the woman.

They aren't calling her a culprit yet.

"We don't know that the woman is the person who stole the camera, but she obviously has had some connection with it in the meantime and I'd like to speak to her about it," said Sussex officer Gavin Crute in a news release.

The phone had been stolen from the Coalition nightclub in Brighton, East Sussex earlier this month.

This woman is wanted for questioning in the case of a stolen iPhone in Britain. COURTESY SUSSEX POLICE

The photo was taken from a different location.

The owner had an app installed that takes a picture of anyone trying to unlock the phone and then sends the information back to them via email.

The app, identified by some media outlets to be IGotYa, is not available from the official Apple store.

The camera is activated when a wrong password is entered on the keypad.

Crute said that not only does the app photograph someone trying to unlock the phone, but it maps their location.

"We know where and when the photo was taken and it appears to be in a vehicle with quite a large sunroof," Crute said.

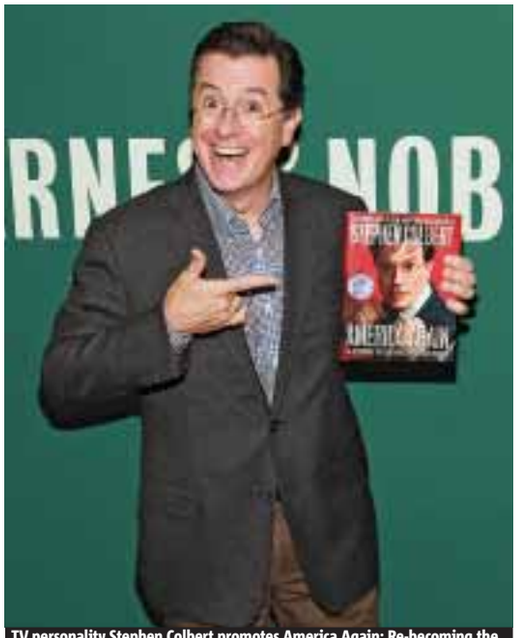
Apple has a free app called Find my iPhone, which shows a stolen phone's approximate location.

It does not, however, take a picture.

A similar story was told in New York last year, when a Queens woman was robbed while walking along a street.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Windsor BIA steps up campaign to woo Colbert



TV personality Stephen Colbert promotes America Again: Re-becoming the Greatness We Never Weren't, in which he refers to Windsor, Ont., as "the Earth's rectum" in October in New York City. GETTY IMAGES FILE

'Earth's rectum' furor.

With new video, locals make last-ditch attempt at convincing comedian to host holiday parade

LUKE SIMCOE
Metro in Windsor

With less than four days to go until its inaugural Santa Claus parade, the Downtown Windsor Business Improvement Association is hoping a new video will convince Stephen Colbert to play host.

Filmed by Marshall Sfalcin and starring BIA chair Larry Horwitz, the video is the latest missive in a campaign that began last month when Colbert responded on his show to the brouhaha over his referencing of Windsor, Ont., as "the Earth's rectum" in his new book America Again: Re-becoming the Greatness We Never Weren't. (He told viewers he could have just as easily been talking about Winnipeg.)

Since then, Horwitz has been trying to get the American comedian to cross the border and serve as the grand marshal of the new holiday parade.

Although filmed "entirely in Windsor," the video tells the tale of Horwitz's journey to New York to deliver a box full of Canadian goodies to Colbert. Along the way, he encounters rude baristas and has a run-in with security at Colbert's Comedy Central studios.

The downtown Santa Claus Parade is scheduled for 3 p.m. on Saturday. To date, Colbert has not responded to the BIA's request.

Quoted

"We've been given a clean bill of health."

Larry Horwitz, chair of the Downtown Windsor Business Improvement Association, who claims a 'geoproctologist' has examined Windsor and found that the city isn't the Earth's rectum after all

Online

Watch the video at metronews.ca.

Facebook. Hunger Games tops pop-culture mentions in 2012

The Hunger Games, the teen survival movie based on the Suzanne Collins book of the same name, tops the list of the most talked about pop culture events by Canadians on Facebook in 2012, the social media network says.

"Most talked about" means mentioned in status updates or posted as a video or story link. The company does not disclose numbers, only rankings.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Top 5 talked about

- **No. 1** Hunger Games film
- **No. 2** The Avengers film
- **No. 3** Television show The Walking Dead
- **No. 4** The Feb. 11 death of Whitney Houston
- **No. 5** Mitt Romney

Online health services

WebMD to cut jobs by 14%

Health website operator WebMD says it will cut about 14 per cent of its workforce as part of a push to reduce costs.

The New York company says the cuts amount to about 250 positions, and it expects to reduce annual operating expenses by $45 million US.

WebMD provides health and benefits information to consumers, employers, doctors and health plans.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR 101.40¢ (+0.08¢)

TSX 12,282.36 (+51.88)

OIL $85.79 US (+23¢)

GOLD $1,709.60 US (-$4.80)

Natural gas: $3.41 (-5¢)
Dow Jones: 13,248.44 (+78.56)

Economic status. Poorest Canadians see few gains in absolute income

By the numbers

$15,200

The after-inflation level of income of those in the bottom 20 per cent increased to only $15,200 in 2010 from $12,700 in 1998.

Income inequality in Canada has remained steady since 1998 according to the traditional benchmark, but absolute dollar gains by the country's highest earners have far outstripped the gains by those at the bottom, a report by TD Bank said Tuesday.

Even though the poorest saw a slightly larger percentage gain in income, absolute gains — the amount of dollars in a person's pocket — tell a different story, said TD Bank chief economist Craig Alexander.

"Although the traditional benchmark of income inequality isn't showing an increase, the absolute levels of income matter enormously," he said.

After a 20-per cent increase, the after-inflation level of income of those in the bottom 20 per cent increased to only $15,200 in 2010 from $12,700 in 1998.

Meanwhile, at the high end of the income scale, the top 20 per cent have seen an 18-per cent increase in income since 1998, but that translates into $26,700 to bring their income to $171,900.

"So part of the issue around income inequality is the fact that households at the low end of the income scale have extremely absolute low levels of income, and that's a major challenge," Alexander said.

And, he points out, those in the middle of the range have seen the slowest pace of increases as the downward pressure on jobs and wages in the manufacturing sector has weighed on growth.

Alexander said within the middle group there was likely a range of experiences depending on what sector individuals were employed in.

The report says the gap between rich and poor increased in the 1990s as governments worked to balance their budgets, but since then has held steady.

The results compared with growing income inequality in the U.S. which has seen its middle class eroded over the last two decades. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada Post. Holiday rush brings onslaught of mail — and griping

By the numbers

96%

Canada Post says it has an on-time delivery rate of 96 to 98 per cent, depending on the time of year and the way an item is delivered.

It's supposed to be a time when festive packages are delivered with care and yuletide greeting cards are opened with glee.

But for some Canada Post customers — and the postal employees who have to deal with their complaints — it's not exactly the hap-happiest time of the year.

As the volume of letters and parcels being delivered by the Crown corporation reaches massive levels over the holidays so, too, does the griping.

When Canada Post issued a release on its Facebook page Dec. 3, urging people to check international send-by dates for Christmas packages, there were dozens of not-so-kind responses from people bitterly upset about lost parcels, late deliveries and high postage costs.

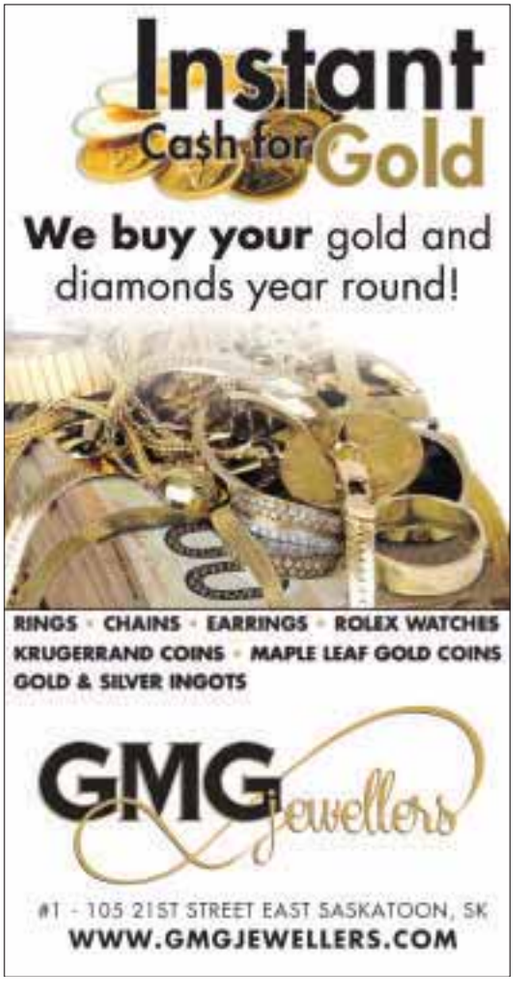
Faster technology has made it easier to locate packages, but has also raised people's expectations of how quickly their goods should arrive, said Canada Post spokeswoman Anick Losier. "Our No. 1 call to the customer service is 'Where's my parcel?' — the day before it's due," she said.

"We're now in a world where we're ordering online and the next thing we do is go track our parcel to see where it's at."

"We call it the 'Generation-I-Want-It-Now.'"

THE CANADIAN PRESS

For Canada Post customers and employees alike, the festive season is not necessarily full of festive spirit. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE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CAGE CLOSED ON IKEA MONKEY

JUST SAYIN'
Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

Is the monkey over yet?

For 15 minutes, the Ikea Monkey was the most famous monkey in the world, the toast of everyone from Warren Kinsella to Anderson Cooper.

There he was last Sunday, larking around a Toronto Ikea parking lot in his cute little shearling coat and diaper, searching for the meatball special, distracting us for one brief monkeyshines moment, from the end of the world (Dec. 21) or the fiscal cliff (Jan. 1). If the Mayans don't get us, the U.S. Congress will.

I mean, come on. How could you resist the combination of a place where you buy rättviken sinks and ektorp sofa beds with a baby monkey named Darwin who brushes his teeth before he goes to bed and wears a Wizard of Oz-winged monkey costume for Halloween?

It was all fun until the authorities stepped in. They confiscated the coat and sent him to Story Book Farm Primate Sanctuary in Sunderland, north of Toronto. Arguably the story gets better. Now, Darwin, stripped of his raiment, has to learn to be a real monkey all over again. He'll have to bond with the other monkeys, and he'll have to do it without his 'nuck-'nuck (baby pacifier).

He's a caged animal

So that's it for Darwin, although he does leave a Twitter account and Facebook page behind, but he'll have to update his status from "free-ramblin'" to "caged."

Darwin's owner is distraught. Darwin is, after all, seven months old, and needs his mommy, even if his mommy has a little trouble telling one primate species from another. Now Darwin has gone to live on the back of some other confused primate. Sanctuary staff are hoping that will be Sweet Pea, a baboon rescued from a roadside zoo.

As you might imagine, Sweet Pea has issues, but she loves to nurture things — kittens, fake fur, naugahyde, so cute little Darwin is just the thing.

The owner is a lawyer, and, naturally, she's considering legal action to get her monkey back. When you're a hammer, everything looks like a nail, but she should be careful what she sues for.

Cute little baby rhesus monkeys grow into cute, 50-centimetre-tall adults that carry diseases and fling their feces. She might want to leave Darwin up in Sunderland, cavorting with the lemurs (cue King Julien doing the morning exercise routine: "I like to move it, move it!")

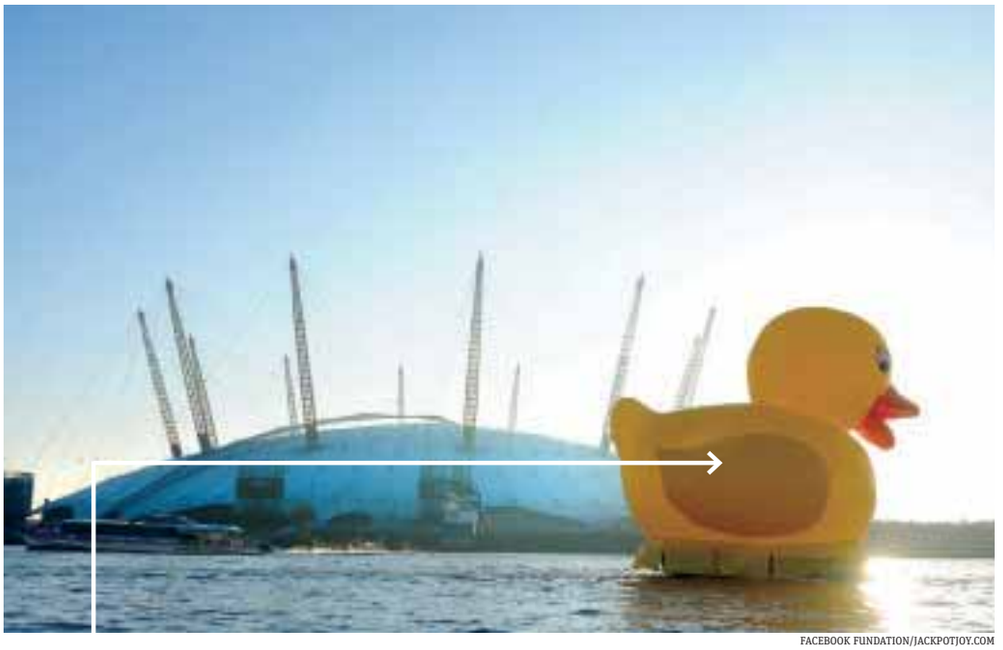
So that's it for Darwin, although he does leave a Twitter account and Facebook page behind, but he'll have to update his status from "free-ramblin'" to "caged."

As for the rest of us, we'll find some other Internet meme to distract us. But it will be a long time before that poignant picture of that little guy wandering around the Ikea parking lot looking for the ball room fades from memory.

A long time. At least another 15 minutes.

Darwin will have to adjust to living like a monkey at Story Book Farm Primate Sanctuary in Sunderland, Ont. NIAMH SCALLAN/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Rubber ducky, you're the big one



FACEBOOK FUNDATION/JACKPOTJOY.COM

Duck tales

Massive duck sails through London

Londoners were treated to an unusual spectacle Tuesday as a giant 15-metre rubber duck floated down the River Thames.

The oversized bath toy got special treatment as the iconic Tower Bridge opened to allow it to sail through. The gigantic bird was launched to publicize a $400,000) bursary to encourage Brits to have more fun. METRO

According to research commissioned by the FUNdation, British adults laugh 7.2 times a day on average, but psychologists say we should laugh 15 times a day for optimal health and happiness.

LEWIS WHYLD/PA WIRE/PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

Rubber ducks in the past

Bath toys outline ocean currents

In 1992, a container with 29,000 plastic bath toys fell off a cargo ship in the Pacific Ocean and broke open. The rubber ducks eventually washed up on shores in Japan, Hawaii and North America.

By studying the ocean currents, oceanographer Curtis Ebbesmeyer correctly predicted their trip via the Northwest Passage to Great Britain. METRO

Duck dimensions

- **Weight.** 500 kilograms.
- **Size.** 15 metres tall and 18 metres wide.
- **Construction.** Made by an eight-person team, who spent more than 800 hours creating patterns, cutting and welding the sections together to produce the air-tight structure before it took to the water.

Quoted

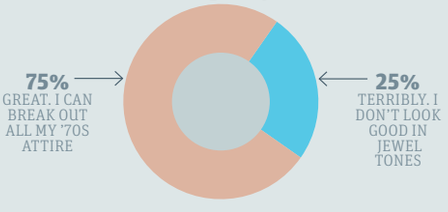
"We now want people to send us their own entries of wacky things they'd like to do, and we'll provide funding for the best ones."

Barbara Windsor, actress and patron of Jackpotjoy.com's new Facebook FUNdation bursary

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

Emerald is Pantone's colour of the year for 2013. How does that grab you?



Twitter

@knownastron: First time in my life I've been the most underdressed person in the room.

@pclothespress: So Frankenstein, Murphy Brown, and the Cash For Gold guy walk into a barn...

@auntiecat24: Just heard on radio my January practicum location has a Norwalk type virus. Hope that doesn't happen when I am there. #saskatoon

@Saskatoonauthor: In #Saskatoon #yxe you can have a city employee come out to your street and examine your ruts for driveability. #worldclasscity

@93cutlass: Really appreciate the city of Saskatoon cleaning all the streets. Complete nightmare on my suspension.

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Never too late for a series spinoff

Television. Some of the best shows of our generation could still stand the test of time if they were converted into a new series

MIKE DOJC
scene@metronews.ca

Boy Meets World could meet Girl Meets World in a revisiting of the once-popular series. HANDOUT

Time has a way of stoking retro fever and nostalgia mining has a deep drill bit. It used to be conventional wisdom that you had a limited window to spinoff a TV show and breathe new life into departing characters before their cache cooled.

Frasier's 11 season run got started the same year Cheers stopped serving drinks and Buffy's vampire boy-toy Angel staked a claim on his own show while the slayer was still only halfway through stabbing Sunnydale's undead population.

The 1990s coming-of-age comedy Boy Meets World has been off the air for a dozen years, but it looks like this TV graveyard corpse is about to get reanimated with original stars Ben Savage and Danielle Fishel on board.

Girl Meets World will revisit Cory and Topanga in the present day where they now have a 13-year-old daughter. This development leaves us wondering; what other long-ago put-to-pasture series are ready to wake up and smell the future?

Steering Urkel back to fame

With Big Bang Theory garnering stratospheric ratings, it's clear there's more room for geeks in primetime. Fashion finally caught up with Steve Urkel's once gauche cardigans and plaid button downs that used to set him apart from the crowd.

The former TGIF mainstay is decidedly hipster in modern times, and adulthood has ironed out his voice's squeakiness so he doesn't even need his nerd-suppressing alter ego Stefan to make the ladies swoon.

The Pilot: Hired as the CEO of Virgin Galactic, Urkel struggles to keep one foot on the ground in Chicago where he and Laura are raising a brood of wily little Urkelos and the other in orbit catering to the whims of wealthy space tourists. Good thing his father-in-law Carl Winslow is still around to steer him in the right direction.

Friend to an Acquaintance

Watching present day Monica, Chandler and company reunite at Central Perk and yuk it up would be interesting television for about five minutes. Rather than dwell on past relationships already fleshed out over the course of 200-plus episodes, Acquaintances breaks new ground by focusing on the still loosely intertwined lives of the core cast of Friends. The hitch is they play caricatures of their slightly past-their-prime real-life selves a la Matt Leblanc on Episodes.

The Pilot: Courtney Cox begs Jennifer Aniston to appear on Cougar Town, which in the show's universe has switched networks once again and is hanging on by a thread. Jen relents, but not before making Courtney alphabetize her stack of Sexiest Woman Alive magazine appearances and polish her Golden Globe.

The XY Files

Flirty David Duchovny is much more palatable than spooky Duchovny. Besides, the Californication star is way more believable unzipping little black dresses and puffing post coitus cigs than chasing little grey men and attempting to see the truth behind smoking man's kabuki theatre.

The Pilot: A mysterious pandemic has winnowed the world's male population down to just 10 per cent, leaving virile men in high demand. Working in conjunction with the Center for Disease Control who discovered the virus was man-made, the FBI responds by opening the XY Files, a new task force intent on apprehending the culprits. Groaning sci-fi fans will be placated by the presence of Gillian Anderson's shrewd disapproving gaze as well as fanboy jaw droppers Katee Sackoff and Summer Glau thrown in for good measure.

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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

A look back: Celebrity engagements of 2012

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Despite the fact that every single person in Hollywood gets divorced, these true-believers decided to throw caution to the wind and become betrothed. We look at the big ones:

Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie
The deets: Pitt proposed to Jolie, his longtime girlfriend with whom he has six children, in April with a $500,000,16-carat rock. "It seems to mean more and more to our kids," he says about finally tying the knot, to Us Weekly.
Wedding date: Ha. Like they'd tell us.

Justin Theroux and Jennifer Aniston
The deets: The two actors, who met on the set of Wanderlust, got engaged in New York City on Aug. 10. Theroux proposed with an eight-carat ring, worth an estimated $500,000.
Wedding date: Again, we'll never know until they sell their photos to the magazine of their choice.

Liam Hemsworth and Miley Cyrus
The deets: They might be young (he's 22, she's 20) but that doesn't mean they won't last forever (actually, yes, yes it does). The Hunger Games actor proposed to Cyrus in May, three years after they started dating, with a 3.5-carat diamond ring.
Wedding date: Eh, you REALLY think this one is going to happen?

Hilaria Thomas and Alec Baldwin
The deets: The two love birds got engaged in April, less than a year after they first met.
Wedding date: It actually already happened (Baldwin moves fast). The two were wed in June in New York City.

Avril Lavigne and Chad Kroeger
The deets: The two got engaged in August, surprising a lot of fans (and gossip columnists) who didn't even know they were dating. "Things just clicked real quick," Kroeger, the lead singer of Nickleback, told a radio station about Lavigne.
Wedding date: I'm kind of getting the vibe they'll skip the wedding and just go straight to procreating Canadian royalty.

Evan Rachel Wood and Jamie Bell

The deets: The two got engaged in January. They met while starring in a Green Day music video; they broke up when she moved on with Marilyn Manson and reconnected when her engagement to the goth rocker ended.
Wedding date: Already happened! They were married on Halloween in California. "It was a small ceremony with close family and friends," said her rep in a statement.

Pamela Anderson in deep over taxes

Pamela Anderson

Pamela Anderson is in hot water with the IRS. Two tax liens were recently filed against the former Baywatch star totaling more than $370,000, according to TMZ.

The IRS claims Anderson owes just over $250,000, with the rest coming from a filing by the state of California. Still, the total is something of an improvement for Anderson, who was added to California's list of the top 250 debtors in 2010, when she reportedly owed more than $493,000.

Twitter

@kirstiealley
Dear PA who rang the gate with a script at 3 AM..notice mailbox to the left of driveway...NOTICE the actress with a Glock in upstairs window

@NiallOfficial
Sittin at home! Bored t death!

@Mruff221
I got a text from Joss Whedon the other day. Sounds like he is writing some very interesting stuff for Banner and his alter ego The Hulk.

@AlbertBrooks
By not tweeting I have gained substantially more followers.

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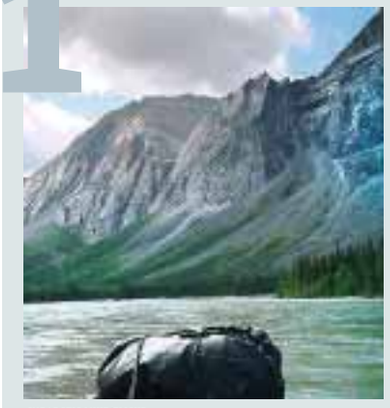
5 spots the Canadian Amazing Race should hit

It's coming to Canada, and it's staying here too. Cheers could be heard in households throughout the country when it was announced that The Amazing Race Canada would follow Canadians traipsing the true north strong and free while competing in challenges. Debuting next summer, producers promise the show will be a love letter to Canada, but haven't revealed which areas of the country will be featured. Here are five worthy location suggestions, along with challenge ideas too.

MAE BOWRING
life@metronews.ca

1 Canoeing the South Nahanni River



SUBARCTIC MIKE/FLICKR

Breathtaking mountain ranges, falls twice the height of Niagara, hot springs and gorgeous flora and fauna can all be viewed along the Nahanni in the North West Territories. Contestants would be challenged with trying to stay afloat through rapids as they navigate the river's four canyons.

2 Mountain Biking in Whistler

Skiers and snowboarders flock to the snow-capped mountains of British Columbia in the winter months, but during the summer, it's all about biking. With courses that feature sharp turns, rugged terrain and stomach-in-your-throat drops, it's not for the faint of heart. The team who makes it to the bottom of the course first in one piece wins.

ANDY_C/FLICKR

3 Driving the Cabot Trail

Arguably the country's most scenic drive and popular among domestic and international tourists, the highway features stunning vistas and wildlife as it weaves throughout Eastern Canada. Contestants would have to work a shift at one of the bed and breakfasts along the route, catering to fellow tourists. The team that gets the highest marks for service wins the challenge.

4 Survivor in the Thousand Islands

A picturesque destination for vacationers wanting to get away from it all, the thousand islands is known for its picture-frame worthy sunsets. Contestants would be tasked with navigating small sailboats along the Saint Lawrence River until they find an uninhabited island. The first group to start a small fire wins.

HDRAGON/FLICKR

5 Scavenger Hunt through Kensington Market

A multicultural and national historic site in Toronto, even the oddest item on a shopping list can be found among the eclectic shops and market merchants. To prove the point, contestants would be given an obscure list of food and clothing items to buy and the first team to get all of them would win.

MARKYEG/FLICKR

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CO-OP TRAVEL

There's more than sun in St. Lucia

Explore the island. Once you've sipped your blended drink and kicked back on the beach, there's plenty more to entertain you

KATHY BUCKWORTH
life@metronews.ca

Kathy Buckworth helps harvest cocoa pods. PROVIDED BY KATHY BUCKWORTH

With average temperatures ranging between 22 C and 32 C, St. Lucia has long been a destination for sun seekers. But those who come for the sun and sand find that there is much more to this beautiful West Indies island. For those who tire of lounging at soft sandy beaches, gazing at the two Pitons (mountains) and sipping tropical drinks, it is well worth it to explore the island.

Chocolate infused cuisine

Cocoa is the second largest crop in St. Lucia (bananas being No. 1), and with the establishment of Chocolate Heritage Month in November, St. Lucia is becoming well-known for producing extremely high quality chocolate. The Hotel Chocolat, which exemplifies the infiltration of chocolate, opened in March 2011 as an extension of the extremely successful Hotel Chocolat U.K. brand. The hotel offers a "tree to bar" tour which has participants harvesting a bean, going through the fermenting, drying, and roasting process, turning the chocolate nibs into paste and then liquid chocolate takes it full circle. The chocolate nibs from the cocoa pods are used in most of the menu offerings at their gourmet restaurant Boucan, including a chocolate grinder settled next to the salt and pepper. Their spa, like many others, includes several chocolate treatments. The Treetop Spa at the Sugar Beach resort down the road offers a chocolate mint massage treatment in one of their seven treetop treatment rooms, which of course should be followed by a decadent chocolate dessert in their beachside gourmet restaurant, Bayside. Cap Maison also offers a tapas-style menu which includes many cocoa-infused dishes.

Outdoor adventure activities

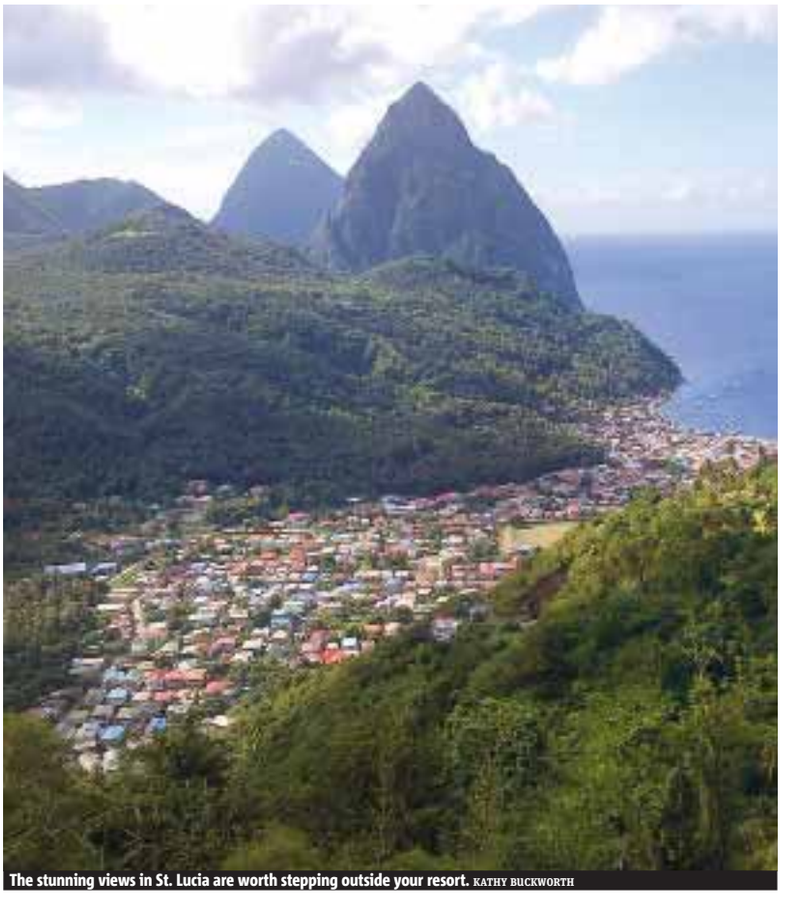
St. Lucia's lush landscapes are beautifully maintained in their very natural forms, allowing for some unique hiking opportunities up the Gros Piton (ironically the Petit Piton is not often climbed, due to its steepness). Most hotels offer guided hiking tours to the top for the fit and adventurous. At a lower altitude, the Caribbean Sea is a warm and crystal clear body of water, and most resorts offer sailing, windsurfing, kayaking and other water sports. For the even more adventurous, take advantage of being in an actual rainforest and visit Rainforest Adventures for ziplining through lush fauna and foliage. Start at 1,400 feet and zip down to 600, through 3,442 acres of wildlife and forest. Mongoose, boa constrictors, wild pigs and more make noise and movement under your feet. There is an option to take a four hour guided hike with a trained guide, or for a slower pace, the tram ride provides a more stable ride to the top.

If you go...

- **Hotel Chocolat.** thehotelchocolat.com
- **Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort.** viceroyhotelsandresorts.com/en/sugar-beach
- **Cap Maison.** capmaison.com
- **Rainforest Adventures.** rainforestadventure.com
- **WestJet.** Flies to St. Lucia twice weekly.

Customer service

Visits to several high end resorts on the island revealed that their staff to customer ratio is high. Former Jalousie Plantation and now Sugar Beach Resort has 78 rooms/villas, with just fewer than 500 on staff, including 100 grounds people. The stunning cliffside Jade Mountain can handle approximately 60 guests and has 200 staff, including a personal butler assigned to each room. The Hotel Chocolat with eight villas and six lodges has 150 staff at their guests' service. At Sugar Beach, one need merely wave the red drink flag to have service appear in seconds by the pool. At Cap Maison resort, the Champagne Zipline" has proven to be an instant hit.


The stunning views in St. Lucia are worth stepping outside your resort. KATHY BUCKWORTH

One of the two Pitons. KATHY BUCKWORTH

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Saskatoon Wildlife Club is located 3 miles north of Central Avenue and Attridge.

Drink of the Week

Uchuva Cocktail

- 150 grams whole uchuva (cape gooseberries)
- 150 ml water
- 150 g sugar
- 360 ml gin
- 540 ml sparkling wine, cold
- 18 uchuvas, for muddling
- 24 mint leaves, for muddling
- 220 grams of ice
- Mint sprigs, for garnish

To make syrup, combine sugar and water in saucepan and cook over medium heat until sugar completely dissolves. Cool syrup in freezer. Combine uchuvas and syrup in blender and process on high 1 min. Pass mix through fine mesh strainer and discard solids. In pitcher, combine 180 ml of uchuva syrup, mint leaves and 18 uchuvas and muddle, 2 mins. Strain syrup and discard mint and uchuva pulp. Add gin and ice to syrup and stir 1 min. to chill; strain out ice. To serve, add sparkling wine, stir and divide the cocktail into 6 champagne flutes. Decorate each flute with a mint sprig.

PROEXPORT COLOMBIA

A very Colombian Christmas

Although many Canadian families have classic traditions for this time of year, it can be fun to spice things up with recipes from international hot spots.

Known for its historical urban centres, stunning beaches and Spanish nightlife, Colombia also has a lot to offer — even in the kitchen.

The country boasts scrumptious yuletide dishes that even the most amateur chef can prepare to impress guests by turning a typical holiday party into the ultimate fiesta. One of them is this Pork Tenderloin and Uchuva Pesto.

The "cape gooseberry," commonly known in Colombia as uchuva, can be found in local grocery stores.

Pork Tenderloin and Uchuva Pesto

Wow your guests with the use of uchuva (gooseberry) in this main dish. PROEXPORT COLOMBIA.

Ingredients

- 150 g uchuva (cape gooseberry), chopped
- 50 g pistachio, finely chopped
- 15 g cilantro, finely chopped
- 50 g shallot, finely chopped
- 50 ml extra virgin olive oil

For the pork:

- Pork tenderloin, cleaned
- Salt and black pepper
- 30 ml sunflower or grape seed oil
- 60 g butter
- 100 g uchuva, sliced
- 12 g thyme
- 8 garlic cloves
- 12 uchuvas, thinly sliced for garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F (205 C).

2. In bowl, combine the first five ingredients to prepare the uchuva pesto and set aside.

3. Slice the pork tenderloin into 6 portions and season with salt and black pepper.

4. Heat a heavy oven–proof skillet on high heat for 2 minutes and add half of the oil. Sear 3 portions of tenderloin and cook until brown on one side. Turn to sear the other side and add half of the sliced uchuvas, butter, thyme and garlic and allow the butter to melt completely in the pan.

5. Lower the heat to low. Tilting the pan forward, cover the tenderloins with the butter-uchuva mixture for 2 minutes. Place on a plate, clean skillet and repeat cooking procedure for the other portions of meat.

6. Place the first three portions back on the skillet and place in the oven. Cook for approximately 10 to 12 minutes. Remove the skillet from the oven and place the tenderloins on a rack to cool for 10 minutes.

7. Place the pork slices on a serving platter. Cover generously with the uchuva pesto and garnish with thinly sliced uchuva.

PROEXPORT COLOMBIA

This isn't your grandma's Fruit Cake

This Exotic Fruit Cake from Colombia isn't your average holiday treat. It will satisfy even the harshest fruit cake critic.

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F (177 C).

2. In a medium bowl, beat the eggs with the milk.

3. In a stand mixer, mix the flour, sugar, salt and baking powder on low speed.

4. Add the butter to the flour mixture little by little. When the butter is incorporated, add the egg mixture slowly. Stop the machine and scrape down the sides of the bowl. Beat the cake batter on high speed for 2 minutes.

Your guests will be pleasantly surprised when they bite into this Exotic Fruit Cake. PROEXPORT COLOMBIA

5. Add the exotic dried fruit and stir with a spatula to combine.

6. Place batter in baking molds. For individual portions use muffin tins with paper cupcake liners. A greased bread mold may also be used. When using muffin tins, fill each only half way.

7. Bake the fruit cakes for 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the middle of the cakes comes out clean and dry.

8. Let the cakes rest for 10 minutes and then remove them from the mold. Serve warm.

PROEXPORT COLOMBIA

Colombia's sweet side

metronews.ca

- For delicious Uchuva Angel Food Cup Cakes visit metronews.ca/food

Ingredients

- 3 eggs, room temperature
- 45 ml whole milk, room temperature
- 150 g cake flour
- 150 g white sugar
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 185 g butter, room temperature
- 1 1/2 cup exotic dried fruits (gooseberry, dragon fruit, mango, pineapple, guava, etc.)

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A holly, jolly and important opportunity

Seasonal employment. You've got some extra time, so let your many abilities shine

MICHELLE CIRCOSTA
TalentEgg.ca

Employers everywhere are preparing for the holiday rush and they need all the help they can get.

As a student, seasonal employment can be a great opportunity to try your hand at a position you may have never otherwise considered. Anaar Merali, division director of permanent placements at staffing firm Robert Half International shared her perspective on the benefits of seasonal employment:

Get the job

To land a seasonal job, it's important that the employer knows you're available immediately and flexible. Make it known that you are open to various types of positions.

"Be open and eager but not desperate," says Merali.

Keep an open mind

Working a seasonal job is the perfect opportunity to try working in a different industry and expand your professional network. Seasonal jobs are a fantastic way to get your foot in the door at a company where openings are less frequent.

For a recent grad in that transitional period, seasonal employment is a way to make some extra income instead of waiting around for permanent employment. And for students, it is an excellent way to make some much needed extra money during the holidays.

At the very least, you will have new and diverse experience to add your resumé. But what's more is these opportunities can often lead to permanent work. According to Merali, this happens quite frequently: "When people do such a good job, they often leave a huge impact."

Give yourself the gift of a glowing CV. ISTOCK

Make the most of the opportunity

If your aim is to turn a seasonal job into full-time employment, the best thing you can do is leave an impression. Always be very professional and build relationships with everyone — managers, supervisors, the entire staff. Approach all of your tasks as if your decisions will have a long-term impact. Don't get stuck in the mindset that the job is just temporary, otherwise you will ensure that it is. Be committed and engaged.

"Be sure to showcase your skills," says Merali. If you are a seamless fit for the position, the company will have no choice but to keep you around. Demonstrate that you would be an asset to the company as a whole and that your skills are transferable between departments. Look at it and as an extended interview. If you are fortunate enough to have this chance, challenge yourself to think big.

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Reprint that resumé!

Jobs are everywhere

Seasonal opportunities go beyond just retail. There are several firms in the financial sector that will take on extra help during their busy seasons. Accounting firms, for example, will often hire seasonal employees during tax season. If you do your research and ask around, you will find that these jobs are anywhere and everywhere. Take advantage of busy seasons — the end of the quarter or the year means more potential jobs.

Student voice

All that I've gained from getting involved

Kelsey Goforth
Graduate
Honours Bachelor of Arts in Political Science
University of Toronto
TalentEgg.ca

While pursuing my undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto, I studied political science with an emphasis on human rights and international development. This past summer I was finishing up my final credit and was searching for the perfect summer job that would hopefully lead me into a career field directly related to these interests.

I was aware that a company called Public Outreach fundraised for developmental and human rights organizations and I had always been intrigued by the fundraisers that I had seen, but didn't picture myself taking on such a role.

However, on the advice of a friend, I applied. The role definitely surprised me. I had no idea how much I would be learning about various not-for-profit charities and how many amazing conversations I would have with donors. One highlight is when I met a woman from Zimbabwe who actually received aid from one of the charities I was fundraising for.

The position turned into far more than a summer job when roles in the recruitment department opened up. I began applying and eventually, in August, I took on the role of U.S. Recruiter, where I was responsible for recruitment in Boston, Chicago, New York City and Minneapolis. I was able to transition quite quickly to my new role, going from fundraiser to recruiter in three short months. Being able to learn about the inner-workings of a whole new department has given me the opportunity to better understand and appreciate all that the company does.

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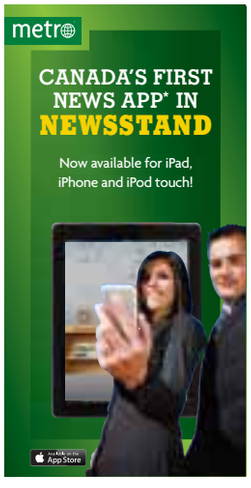

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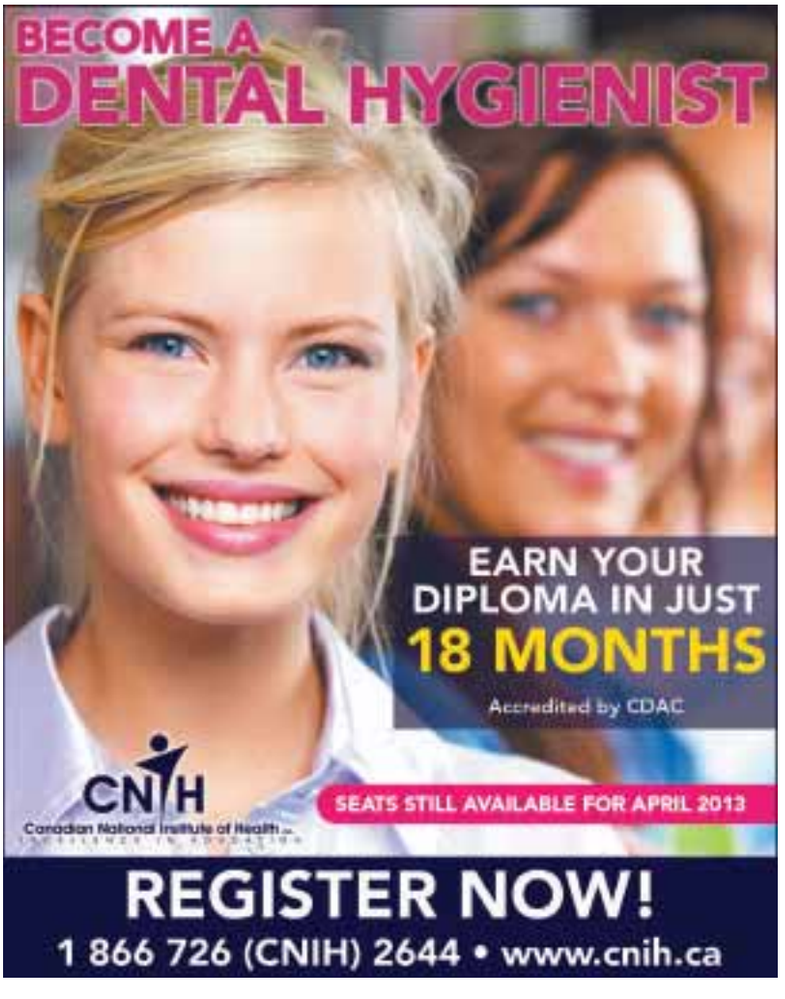
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CONVENIENCE AND VARIETY

GIFT CARDS GIVE RECIPIENTS OPTIONS

Michael Bennett is an occasional gift card giver.

"I sometimes give them as thank you gifts or stocking stuffers," says the Guelph, Ont., man. "They're convenient and easy to give. The downside of them is they're easy to rely on them rather than discovering what someone likes and choosing a gift they would appreciate."

What is it about gift cards that we love so much? Is it the fact that we can buy them virtually anywhere? At a variety of price points in a variety of outlets?

"People generally know what type of store their friends or kids like to shop at," says Frances Ho, founder of Canadian site cardswap.ca. "However, they don't know specifically what sweater they prefer or the right pair of jeans. People are very particular about those things. It's just easier to give a card to a store they know they're going to enjoy."

While Ho believes it's more socially acceptable to give gift cards, she does believe it makes a difference in how you present it as a gift.

'If you combine a gift card with a really nice written message in the card, or wrapping it in a big box, it's really the effort that counts. Then it still has a warmth to it," she says.

They are also a nice way to give something to a gift that's too pricey. "That's another benefit — if they're saving up for a larger item and the person can't afford to give you the large item, but they can give you a gift card towards," Ho says.

Gift cards do have their drawbacks, of course. Some come with expiry dates for example.

"And a lot of people tend to spend more money when they spend their gift cards because they treat it like it's free cash. And then they end up spending more than they actually budgeted for," Ho says.

However, you can make your gift card dollar stretch by watching for sales or deals — buy a gift card and pick up a gift for yourself for free, for example. Or re-gift a card that's not a fit for you or take it to a site such as cardswap.ca where you can trade your card in for points or cash.

"We see a variety of gift cards come in and whenever we post things on the site, they're gone within 24 hours because someone else wants that card," Ho says.

– Astrid Van Den Broek

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HEMERA/THINKSTOCK

Midwest Laser Centre offers an answer to your skin rejuvenation needs. The knowledge and experience makes the centre a leader in its field.

Dr. David Will opened the clinic in 1988 and has been on the forefront of laser technology ever since. Do you need gift card ideas for those "hard-to-buy-for" family and friends? Midwest Laser Centre has gift cards available that can be purchased and used towards any of its services and products.

The Midwest Laser Centre offers a wide range of services, including laser hair removal, tattoo removal, wrinkle reduction, laser peel, and skin rejuvenation. The centre specializes in treatments for skin tightening, facial capillaries, pigmented lesion, and acne.

Will is well-known for his injectable Botox platinum plus status, is one of the top five physicians providing Restylane treatments in Canada, and is currently rated as one of the top three Canadian practitioners treating patients with the skin tightening technique, Thermage. Above all, the team at Midwest is dedicated to its patients and passionate about providing the most effective treatment regimen to individuals in order to help them look and feel their best.

The Midwest Laser Centre offers free consultations in a relaxed inviting atmosphere. Please visit their website at midwestlasercentre.com to see what Midwest Laser Centre can do for you or someone on your Christmas list.

As we enter the holiday season, the staff at the Midwest Laser Centre wants to wish each and every one of its clients and patients a joyful holiday season and a healthy, peaceful and prosperous new year.

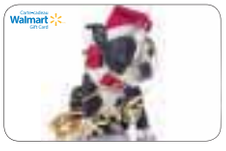
YOUR SIMPLE GIFT SOLUTION

WALMART GIFT CARDS OFFER GREAT PRICES, CHOICES

Wondering what to give the mail carrier, the dog walker, your child's teacher, or the co-worker whose name you picked in the secret Santa draw? Or pretty much anyone on your holiday gift list? Thanks to Walmart, there's a simple solution.

"When you give a Walmart gift card, you're giving the gift of great prices and choices," says Felicia Fefer, Walmart Canada's manager of corporate affairs.

The beauty of giving a Walmart gift card is the person receiving it can choose to use it for whatever they want the most, from fashion and electronics to food and housewares.



There are more than 30 holiday gift card designs, ranging from contemporary (gold, white and purple snowflakes on a purple background) to traditional (holiday bells) and whimsical (cartoon of Santa and friends on a sleigh).

The collection also features cards with specialty finishes, including lenticular cards (where you hold the card still and see one design, then tilt it to view a second design) and scratch 'n' sniff cards (gingerbread is an appropriate scent at this time of year).

There are even cards for pet lovers, with cute images of cats and dogs decked out in holiday accessories.

The gift cards have matching tin carriers that retail for $2.47 each, so no wrapping is necessary. The tins have colourful contemporary Christmas designs that include a red-nosed reindeer pulling a sleigh, Santa with his sack of toys, a pile of gifts under a tree, and blue snowflakes on a white background.

Walmart gift cards can be bought at one store and redeemed at any other store location in Canada. Bonus: When the recipient has spent the amount on the card, it can be reloaded and reused. And the best part? There are no expiry dates.

The holiday-themed cards will be for sale right up until the stores close on Christmas Eve — ideal for last-minute shoppers who still have no idea what to get some of the people on their gift list.

"Walmart gift cards are popular all year long, but especially during the holidays," Fefer says.

"They're the perfect present for those who are hard to shop for or who have everything."

– Jane Doucet

FLEXIBLE PRICING

Located at the cash registers and near the front of the more than 370 Walmart stores across Canada, the gift cards come with a pre-set amount of $25, $50 or $100. Or you can choose the dollar amount — anywhere from $5 to $2,500 — which the cashier will load onto the card.

Shopping for the person who has everything?
Walmart
Give the gift of choice with a Walmart gift card.
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Walmart
Save money. Live better.

Battle of the crease: Four goalies fight for junior jobs

World junior selection camp. Canada will take a third goaltender to Russia as insurance against injury

No goalie feels more pressure at the world junior hockey championship than Canada's starter, says the man cultivating the next one.

Ron Tugnutt is the Canadian team's goaltending coach and has personally experienced that kind of pressure. In addition to a long NHL career, Tugnutt twice represented Canada at the men's world championship.

"There's a lot more pressure on our goalie than on the other teams," Tugnutt said Tuesday at selection camp in Calgary.

When European teams win the semifinal, they're thrilled at the prospect of "at least" a silver medal, but Canadian players aren't interested in anything but gold, he explained.

"When we win the semifinal game, we're only thinking one thing," Tugnutt added.

With no incumbent from the previous world junior championship, a major subplot of selection camp in Calgary this week is who will be Canada's starter, backup and alternate at the 2013 world junior championship starting Dec. 26 in Ufa, Russia.

In a new development, Canada will take a third goaltender as insurance against injury because of the travel time required to get to south-central Russia.

Malcolm Subban of the Belleville Bulls, Laurent Brossoit of the Edmonton Oil Kings, Jordan Binnington of the Owen Sound Attack and Jake Paterson of the Saginaw Spirit are the four invitees. There's little time for them to impress head coach Steve Spott as the 23-player team will be finalized Thursday afternoon.

Coach Spott tried to dampen speculation that Subban, the younger brother of Montreal Canadiens defenceman P.K. Subban, has the inside track on the starting job because he plays on European-sized ice at Belleville's Yardmen Arena.

After four years on North American ice, the world junior tournament returns to a surface four metres wider with just over a half-metre more space between the back of the net and the end boards.

Tugnutt says Subban's big-ice experience is one check mark in his favour.

"I think it is an advantage for him just because it is a different visual," Tugnutt said. "But that's not going to be the determining factor on what happens here."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

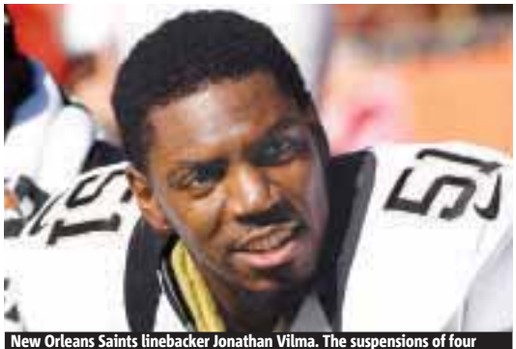
Quoted

"Contrary to belief, there's no starting job being given out, I can tell you guys that."

Canadian juniors head coach Steve Spott on the goalie competition at selection camp.

Goalie Malcolm Subban stretches on Tuesday during the national junior hockey team selection camp in Calgary.
JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Tagliabue overturns 'bounty' suspensions



New Orleans Saints linebacker Jonathan Vilma. The suspensions of four current and former Saints players, including Vilma, have been overturned.
SCOTT ISKOWITZ/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

In a sharp rebuke to his successor's handling of the NFL's bounty investigation, former commissioner Paul Tagliabue overturned the suspensions of four current and former New Orleans Saints players in a case that has preoccupied the league for almost a year.

Tagliabue, who was appointed by commissioner Roger Goodell to handle the appeals, still found that three of the players engaged in conduct detrimental to the league. He said they participated in a performance pool that rewarded key plays — including hard tackles — that could merit fines. But he stressed that the team's coaches were very much involved.

"My affirmation of commissioner Goodell's findings could certainly justify the issuance of fines. However, this entire case has been contaminated by the coaches and others in the Saints' organization," the ruling said.

Tagliabue oversaw a second round of player appeals in connection with the cash-for-hits program run by former defensive co-ordinator Gregg Williams from 2009 to 2011.

Saints linebacker Jonathan Vilma had been given a full-season suspension, while defensive end Will Smith, Cleveland linebacker Scott Fujita and free agent defensive lineman Anthony Hargrove each received shorter suspensions.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Appeals

- None of the players sat out any games because of suspensions.
- They have been allowed to play while appeals are pending, though Fujita is on injured reserve and Hargrove is not with a team.

Lockout

NHL, players to resume talks on Wednesday

The NHL and NHL Players' Association will resume their collective bargaining negotiations at an undisclosed location Wednesday — and they'll have some company.

U.S. federal mediators Scot L. Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney are set to rejoin the process.

It will be the first meeting since the two sides took public shots at each other after talks went off the rails last week.

Prior to the blow-up, they appeared to be making progress during three days in New York that saw an exchange of proposals.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

AHL

Bears' Holtby holds IceCaps at bay

Braden Holtby showed the St. John's IceCaps why he was the Washington Capitals' starter during the NHL playoffs. The 23-year-old from Lloydminster made 32 saves Tuesday as the Hershey Bears beat the IceCaps 2-1. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Tennis

Peliwo's stellar year ends with world's best nod from ITF

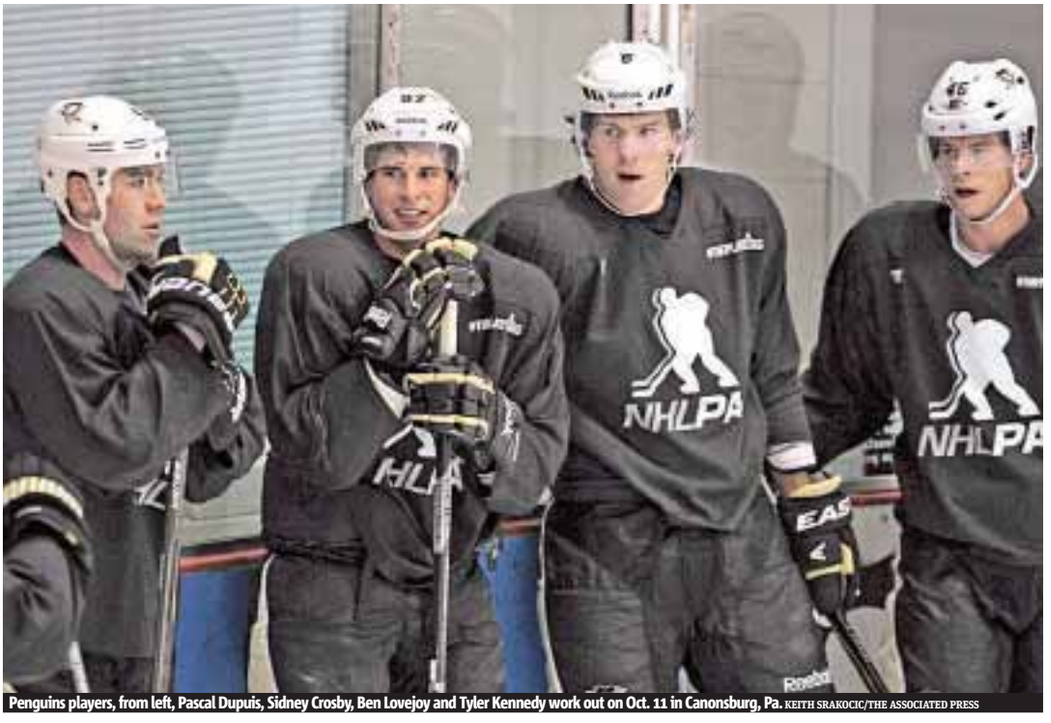
Vancouver's Filip Peliwo was named the International Tennis Federation's junior tennis player of the year on Tuesday.

The 18-year-old reached the junior boys' final of all four grand slam tournaments this year, winning at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Vancouver's Filip Peliwo
THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Crosby and Co. sticking together during lockout

NHL lockout. Group of Penguins working out together in effort to stay ready in case the season is salvaged


Penguins players, from left, Pascal Dupuis, Sidney Crosby, Ben Lovejoy and Tyler Kennedy work out on Oct. 11 in Canonsburg, Pa. KEITH SRAKOCIC/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brooks Orpik had a good reason to head back to Pittsburgh after spending the first three months of the NHL lockout in Massachusetts, and the Penguins defenceman insists it had nothing to do with optimism he and the rest of his teammates are closer to getting back to work.

"I didn't have snow tires on my car, so I was like, 'If I wait this out any longer I'm going to get stuck here and not have a car down in Pittsburgh,"' Orpik said. "It was really just a change of scenery."

Orpik wasn't alone. He carpooled down to Pittsburgh with Tyler Kennedy, and a little bit of peer pressure convinced forward James Neal to join the handful of Penguins who have been working out regularly at the regional ice rink that serves as the team's practice facility.

"It's just something different to stimulate you," Orpik said.

Orpik had been working out with players in the Boston area, monitoring negotiations and attempting to stay sharp. Things felt a little different, however, while skating alongside his teammates for the first time since Pittsburgh lost to Philadelphia in the first round of the 2012 Stanley Cup playoffs.

Having Sidney Crosby around may something to do with it. The captain has been a fixture at the workouts and having 15 players in all — including a couple of non-Penguins — allowed Crosby and company to pick up the pace a little bit.

Crosby has served as the de facto organizer for the drills and is eager to get his career back underway after struggling with concussion-like symptoms for most of the last two years. He attended three days of marathon negotiations between owners and players in New York last week, though he has no plans to be around when talks resume.

While Crosby has long since stopped guessing when the NHL's third labour dispute under commissioner Gary Bettman's watch will end, he remains hopeful hockey will return at some point.

Quoted

"I think one thing that's the same all the way through is that guys are trying to do their best to stay ready and they're trying to make the best of the situation."
Penguins captain Sidney Crosby

"The fact that they're talking is good and I think we've all said that throughout this process, it's better than sitting around and not knowing what everyone is thinking," Crosby said.

Spending three days at the bargaining table, however, tempered any sense a deal was imminent. The league has cancelled games through Dec. 30 and there are still a myriad of concerns that need to be addressed.

"There's a lot of details, a lot of things that go into a CBA and those haven't even been starting to be talked about," Crosby said. "We definitely have some work to do there but I'm sure once all the major things get taken care of, hopefully the process gets a little easier."

Tuesday's turnout was encouraging, sure, but it's also part of an ebb and flow that's been typical since the lockout began.

There have been days when only a handful of players show up. While that can make it difficult at times to get motivated, it hasn't stopped Crosby from showing up, even if instead of a packed house at Consol Energy Center it's a sprinkling of fans, folks working at a gym located over one end of the ice and facility employees.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CFL

Tiger-Cats kill Cortez's career in Hamilton

George Cortez paid the price Tuesday for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats' disappointing season as the CFL team has relieved him of his duties as head coach and director of football operations.

The firing came just over a month after the Ticats wrapped up a 6-12 season.

"After a thorough evaluation of our organization and our goals moving forward, we have determined that a change in direction is needed," team president Scott Mitchell said in a release.

Cortez said he was surprised by the news, but seemed to be taking his dismissal well when he talked to reporters Tuesday.

"That's the way things go," he said. "We didn't win enough games, and ultimately that's what you're judged on." THE CANADIAN PRESS

George Cortez THE CANADIAN PRESS

CFL

Lions lock up all-star linebacker

The B.C. Lions have signed import all-star linebacker Adam Bighill to a contract extension.

The CFL all-star led the team with 104 tackles this past season and earned the club's nomination as outstanding defensive player.

Bighill equalled the team record for tackles in a game (13) on Sept. 29. He earned defensive player of the week honours on four occasions and was defensive player of the month for October. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Soccer. Awards continue to rush in for Sinclair

It really should be called the Christine Sinclair Award.

Sinclair, the scoring machine of Canada's Olympic bronze medal-winning soccer team, has won the country's top female soccer award.

The 29-year-old native of Burnaby, B.C., was named the female Canadian player of the year on Tuesday in a vote by the country's media and coaches.

The prize comes a day after Sinclair was named winner of the 2012 Lou Marsh Award as Canada's top athlete.

"Her instrumental role on the international playing field has brought an overwhelming sense of national pride to Canadian soccer fans," Justine Fedak of BMO Financial Group, sponsors of the player of the year awards, said in a statement. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

By the numbers

9

Christine Sinclair has won the Canadian female player of the year award in nine straight years and 10 times since 2000.

Tennis. Nadal ready to return from knee injury

Rafael Nadal is ready to return to competitive tennis, confirming Tuesday that he'll play in an exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi at the end of the month following a six-month break to recover from a knee injury.

Nadal, 26, began practising on a court in his hometown of Manacor in Spain on Nov. 20 under the supervision of his uncle and coach Tony Nadal and a physiotherapist.

The Abu Dhabi tournament starts Dec. 27 and will feature a six-man field that also includes top-ranked Novak Djokovic and No. 3 Andy Murray of Britain.

Nadal has not played since a second-round loss to then 100th-ranked Lukas Rosol at Wimbledon in June due to the partial tear of a tendon in his left knee. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

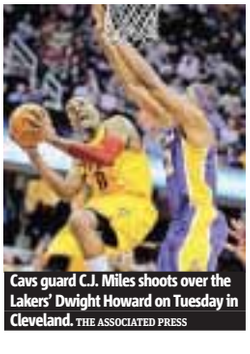
"Can't wait to get back on court in Abu Dhabi at the end of the month."
Rafael Nadal on Twitter and Facebook

NBA. Cavs' Irving helps send Lakers to another loss

Kyrie Irving scored 28 points after missing 11 games with a broken finger, leading the Cleveland Cavaliers to a 100-94 win over the Los Angeles Lakers, who dropped to a new low Tuesday night in a tumultuous season.

Irving added 11 assists in 39 minutes as the Cavs ended a five-game losing streak.

Kobe Bryant scored 42 and Dwight Howard had 19 points and 20 rebounds, but it wasn't enough to stop the Lakers from losing for the eighth time in 11 games. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS


Cavs guard C.J. Miles shoots over the Lakers' Dwight Howard on Tuesday in Cleveland. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The hustle and bustle of the show. ALL PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

This model is part of Honda's new CB500 line.

The Suzuki GW250.

Motorcycle show goes very big on the small

Autopilot

AUTO PILOT
Mike Goetz
drive@metronews.ca

I wouldn't say there is anything wrong with an outrageously loud and overpowered Orange County chopper, especially to the weathered face and tattooed biceps of a large person who just got off such a bike in the parking lot. But bigger motorbikes are just not my style.

I love small motorcycles. They're fun to ride and easy to own. And I'm in the styling camp that gravitates to great proportions above all else, so to me, overall size has very little to do with the visual impact and/or appeal of any given bike or car.

So I was thrilled to see so many neat and smallish rides on the show floor of last weekend's motorcycle show in Toronto.

This is the show run by the manufacturers, via its Motorcycle and Moped Industry Council (MMIC). After Toronto, the MMIC show makes stops in Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Quebec, Moncton and Montreal. (Check local listings for dates and venues).

At last year's show, for example, you wouldn't have seen the new Suzuki GW250, or Honda's new CB500 line (CB500F, CB500X, CBR500R). Honda suddenly has a very attractive and logical progression of street bikes, in 125-cc, 250-cc and 500-cc formats.

"People want an affordable entry level motorcycle. That's where the market is going right now," said Dave Hawson, director of sales and marketing for Suzuki Canada's motorcycle, ATV and marine division.

Hawson added that a lot of the "affordability" of smaller bikes manifests itself in the insurance end, especially for younger and/or newer riders.

He's dead right. My small phone survey to brokers revealed that an 18-year-old looking to insure a 600-cc sportbike in the GTA would be looking at premiums of about $3,500 to $4,000 and beyond.

By contrast, that same 18-year-old rider could insure a 250-cc bike in the GTA for $1,500 to $2,000 — basically half the price.

At the show I ran into Dave Mackenzie of Motorsports Canada, which imports the Wolf Classic 150 — a Honda Rebel knockoff with a 150-cc engine. He felt that up until a few years ago, the Canadian market was "starved" of small motorcycles.

Market trend

"People want an affordable, entry level motorcycle. That's where the market is going right now."

Dave Hawson, director of sales and marketing for Suzuki Canada's motorcycle, ATV and marine division
On what the average recession-hit motorbike customer is looking for these days

He believed the big brands shied away from them here in North America, because there was simply more money to be found, per unit, in the larger bike formats.

I guess it's hard to say whether that was the case, or if it was simply a case of no one wanting to buy the smaller bikes back then.

But there is no denying, however, that the big brands are more aware and concerned than ever that their biggest group of motorcycles buyers — the boomers — are getting older and older and will soon fade from the scene and that they need a new generation of buyers to get into motorcycling culture.

Insurance and industry forces aside, I think people have also generally rediscovered the joys of smallish motorcycles, after years of chasing horsepower and their high-speed capabilities.

For those that like the bigger stuff, have no fear. The influx of smaller bikes has not diminished the number of variety of big, powerful bikes, in all their guises.

To each their own, I say, even if they are so wrong in their big-bike convictions that they can no longer be saved from them.

Even by me.

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Don't take sides or play favourites today. In fact, steer clear of contentious issues altogether if you can. No matter how hard you try to be fair, you will make more enemies than friends.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You are being too serious about something that is of no importance in the greater scheme of things. Focus on what makes you feel good, what makes you laugh, what makes you glad to be alive. Nothing else matters.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
It may seem as if someone you live or work with is trying to undermine your efforts, but in reality you are reading too much into a situation that is quite straightforward. Don't listen to what they say — watch what they do.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
No matter how annoying certain people get today, you must not allow yourself to be provoked. You may be raging on the inside but if you stay calm on the outside it will defuse what could have been a messy situation.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
A sudden attraction is likely today but it may be more than just romantic. Most likely you will meet someone whose mind is a match for your own, and whose sense of humour has you laughing fit to bust.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You need to do some serious thinking about a relationship that has brought you a lot of pleasure but also a considerable amount of pain. Is it worth carrying on with? Only you can decide. Make your choice.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You need to slow down and catch your breath today because what happens over the following three or four days will be both exciting and exhausting. Give your body, your mind and your emotions a rest — they've earned it.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
If you uncover some juicy information about a friend, you should keep it to yourself. It will save them from embarrassment — and give you a bargaining chip you may one day be able to use.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Some people are feeling rather resentful towards you. Why? Because everything you touch turns to gold. It's not your fault you are smack bang in the middle of such a fortunate phase, so don't feel guilty about it.

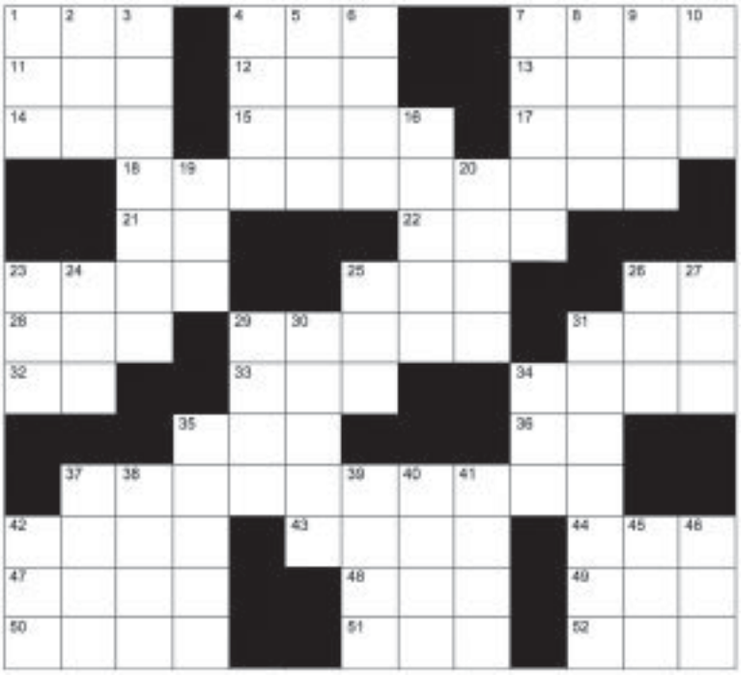
♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
The planets warn that although it's right to feel pleased with what you have achieved, it would be wrong to believe it's all plain sailing from now on. A new challenge is heading your way. Be ready for it.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Stop thinking about what has gone wrong and focus on the many things that are still going right for you. There is no reason at all why you should be in a downbeat mood. Life is good and getting better.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
A friend in need may be the last thing you want to deal with right now but you are not the sort to turn them away. Do what you can to soothe their fears and ease their pain. You'll benefit too, in unexpected ways. SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword

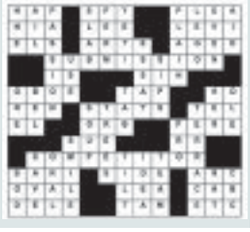
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. Apple product
4. Golfer's goal
7. Reunion attendee
11. Stop – - dime (2 words)
12. Before, or yore
13. Singer/actress Falana
14. Ruin
15. Make over
17. Fashion magazine
18. Star of Touched by an Angel (2 words)
21. – the Heat of the Night
22. Buddhist sect
23. Fuss
25. Gamble
26. "How to Marry a Millionaire" actress (init.)
28. "Con —"
29. Wedge
31. Bikini half
32. Courtroom figure (abbr.)
33. Snakelike fish
34. My Name is —
35. Syrup source
36. Minneapolis state.
37. Wee Irish fairy
42. Actress Ramirez of Grey's Anatomy
43. "— on Me"
44. La Rue of CSI: Miami
47. Related
48. Do away with
49. — Tin Tin
50. Jeans go-with
51. Pauses
52. Unhappy

Down
1. We celebrate her in May
2. Actress Ortiz of Ugly Betty
3. Transporter
4. Hairdo
5. Space
6. Comedian Foxx
7. Actress Close
8. Function
9. — McBeal
10. Daniel — Kim of Hawaii Five-O
16. Seeps
19. Toronto's prov.
20. Dampens
23. Passing fancy
24. Inlet
25. Sound measure
26. Sub zero comment
27. Guy's date
29. Juicy fruit
30. Ward off
31. Pennants
34. Aussie bird
35. Reaches
37. Pond
38. Canal of song
39. Bird-bill part
40. Broadway musical
41. No ifs, — or buts
42. Was in session
45. By way of
46. The Bold – the Beautiful

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

See today's answers metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

5						3		9
		1	3		2			
2					7			
		2					6	
	5	6	4	8	9	7	1	
	7					4		
			2					1
			7		8	6		
1		4						3

Yesterday's Sudoku

8	1	4	6	5	9	2	7	3
5	7	2	8	4	3	9	6	1
9	3	6	1	2	7	8	5	4
4	6	8	9	7	1	5	3	2
3	2	1	5	8	6	4	9	7
7	5	9	4	3	2	1	8	6
1	8	5	3	6	4	7	2	9
6	9	7	2	1	5	3	4	8
2	4	3	7	9	8	6	1	5

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~~$17,995~~ $17,388
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2010 Hyundai Veracruz LTD AWD

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2012 Hyundai Elantra GL

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~~$20,995~~ $18,888
or just $118 bi-weekly
SAVE $2,107

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Black on Grey Interior, Sunroof, Heated Seats, Alloy Wheels, Power Seat, Bluetooth, Premium Cloth Seats
~~$20,995~~ $20,388
or just $134 bi-weekly
SAVE $607

2011 Hyundai Accent GL

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